



# Fresh Pond Shared Use Public Engagement Process Overview

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Consensus Building Institute

This fact sheet was created in partnership with the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), a non-profit organization based in Cambridge, MA, recognized globally as a leader in the field of stakeholder engagement and dispute resolution.  
[cbbuilding.org](http://cbbuilding.org)

## INTRODUCTION

Fresh Pond Reservation is an important open space for Cambridge residents and visitors. It is the terminal reservoir in the water system that provides drinking water to everyone who lives in, works in and visits Cambridge. The Reservation also provides recreational opportunities of all kinds, including the chance for people to walk, bicycle, run, bird watch, picnic, walk dogs off leash, and be in a natural setting in the midst of the city. In addition, volunteer groups work to improve the health of the reservation, nature programs are provided by the Water Department and the Friends of Fresh Pond, and the Maynard Ecology Center provides an informal science learning resource for Cambridge schoolchildren. Because of these many opportunities, people love Fresh Pond, and use has increased in recent years. Increased activity for a variety of purposes has led to increased conflict among users and uses. To provide a shared and effective plan for use of the Reservation in the coming years, the City is engaging the public in seeking creative ideas for improving the experience at Fresh Pond, maintaining diverse uses, and protecting the water supply.

## ASSESSMENT

In spring and summer 2010, the City started working with an impartial facilitation team from the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) to talk with people across the many user groups of the Reservation to get an understanding of how people view their experiences at Fresh Pond, what is working, and what could be improved. The assessment team drafted a memo summarizing the range of views they heard during those interviews, and the City has used that input to shape the plan for the public engagement process.

## PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

The City will engage the public to explore options for improving the experience at Fresh Pond through a series of public meetings from fall 2010 through summer 2011. All will be welcomed at these meetings. The City will encourage the formation of a core group of participants at the beginning of the process to ensure on-going participation, continuity, and understanding as part of the effort. The first of these meetings will be held on September 14, and anyone interested in becoming a part of the core group involved in these deliberations should attend at that time. The meetings will be facilitated by the Consensus Building Institute.

## OUTCOMES

The City intends that this collaborative work will lead to recommendations for new and improved policies, regulations, and/or education for consideration by the Water Board, City Manager and City Council. There could be very simple new guidelines, or recommendations for different types of signage, or other solutions yet to be imagined. The City is eagerly awaiting input from the many people who utilize and benefit from the Reservation.

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# Fresh Pond Shared Use Public Engagement Process Overview (continued)

## HISTORY

Occupying an area of 365 acres, Fresh Pond Reservation encloses and protects the Fresh Pond Reservoir, an ancient glacial kettle pond that formed during the last ice age about 15,000 years ago. The pond and the surrounding woodland and marshes were used as a rich source of food by Native Americans and later by European settlers. In the 1600's, Europeans began haying the meadows, and in the early 1800's the area became a retreat for wealthy Bostonians. Fresh Pond was also a source of ice; every winter the ice was cut and shipped for sale as far away as England, Singapore and India. In 1852, the private Cambridge Water Works Co. was established and began supplying water a few years later; the City of Cambridge purchased the company and its distribution system in 1866 and the Reservoir has served as the source of drinking water for the City of Cambridge since.

In an effort to protect water quality, the ice harvesting infrastructure was removed and a master plan for the Reservation was created. The City of Cambridge contracted the office of Frederick Law Olmsted to create the first formal plan for the use and protection of the Reservation between 1894 and 1909. The plan conceptualized the Reservation as a refuge from the city and proposed significant changes to the landscape, including a circular path around the pond and a natural landscape. Much of the Olmsted plan was never realized due to disagreements between the firm, the public and the City.

## RECENT MANAGEMENT HISTORY AND REGULATIONS

Beginning in 1997, a committee of City staff and Cambridge residents collaborated to create a Master Plan for the Reservation which was adopted by the City Council in May 2000. The vision of the Master Plan is to protect the water supply, enhance the open space and naturalistic character, and contribute immeasurably to the quality of life for the community. Since 2000, the aspects of the Master Plan that have been completed include: a new water treatment facility, over 8 million dollars in landscape restoration and enhancement, and an increase in education and outreach.

Fresh Pond Reservation is managed by the Cambridge Water Department under the general direction of the City Manager. The Water Department is under the regulatory jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the Cambridge Conservation Commission. In addition to these primary regulatory authorities, Fresh Pond Reservation is also under the jurisdiction of the Cambridge Water Board. Over 100,000 Cambridge residents are provided with potable water from City of Cambridge reservoirs.

In recent years, Fresh Pond Reservation projects have focused on landscape restoration; specifically, re-establishing native species and encouraging biodiversity. The projects and priorities were established in the Fresh Pond Master Plan and are guided by the Fresh Pond Advisory Board. These projects have enhanced the Reservation's reputation as a refuge within an urban setting. As a result, the number of visitors from varied user groups has steadily increased.

